THE CULTURES OF THE LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN BASIN

Objective:
The students will conduct research about a chosen or assigned cultural group of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. In cooperative groups the students will gather and organize the information about several cultures, create a concept map, and share the information with the whole class.

Materials:
- Reference books with information about the cultures of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin
- Butcher paper or easel pads
- Thick markers
- Handout: Gathering and Organizing Facts About the Cultures of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin (Pages 268-270)

Getting Ready:
1. Conduct a search for information about the cultural groups in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. Refer to the resource section at the end of this chapter; try the Internet as a research tool; contact resource people in the community.
2. Arrange a field trip to the local library or other resource in your community such as a museum where students can gather facts about cultural history.

Process:
1. Assign cooperative groups. The roles of “information scouts,” “note-takers,” “information organizers,” and “facilitators” will be needed.
2. Provide each group with research materials. Brainstorm with the group additional avenues of information.
3. Give each student a copy of Handout: Gathering and Organizing Facts About the Cultures of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin.
4. Help the groups divide the topics among the members.
5. If you choose to take a field trip to the library or museum, assist the students in selecting relevant information.

6. If the students have never made a concept map before, show them some examples and create a practice concept map with the whole class. (An example is provided on the handout.)

7. After the information gathering is complete, the students work together in their groups to put the main ideas into a concept map. The facilitators in each group are responsible for writing single words and phrases to convey information about the cultural history of their group on the easel paper.

8. Help the groups follow the directions on the handout to complete their concept map.

9. Each group explains its finished concept map to the rest of the class, sharing information about all the cultures studied. Encourage the students to add creativity to their presentation with slide shows, dances, food, traditional dress, etc., to illustrate the culture they studied.

HANDOUT FOLLOWS
1. **Research your own cultural heritage or choose a culture:**

- Native American
- European
- African
- Asian
- South and Central American
- Pacific
- Caribbean
- Canadian

2. **Distribute the following questions to the cooperative groups. Work with a partner to research your questions for the culture you are studying. Write notes in response to each question you answer.**

- What were major differences between the homeland and the Lake Pontchartrain Basin?
- What are some of the culture’s ethnic recipes?
- Describe or draw the traditional dress of the settlers of your culture.
- What are the traditional holidays or festivals of your culture?
- What did the people of your culture traditionally do to make a living?
- What are some of the tools or other artifacts that may be associated with your culture?
- List six characteristic given names for males and females within the culture.
- List place names (e.g. towns and rivers) named by your culture.
- What was the main hardship faced by your culture when they arrived in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin?
- How did the people solve their problems?
- What was the main reason your cultural group came to the Lake Pontchartrain Basin?
- Name the main areas of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin in which the culture settled.
- What is the original language of the culture? Learn some words or phrases from this language. Is the language spoken today by the residents of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin?
- Find and write out a traditional song of the culture.
- Learn a traditional dance of the culture and perform it when your group presents its concept map.
- How did the people use the natural resources available in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin?
3. Make a concept map of your culture. Look at the concept map of the Islenos (Islanders) of St. Bernard Parish (next page). You may use this as a model, or you may adapt or modify it.

4. In your group, share the new information you have found. On an easel pad or piece of paper taped on the wall, write down all the single words or short sentences that represent the facts found for each research area. Do not leave anything out.

5. Organize these words and sentences under appropriate headings or categories. Now you can edit the ideas, leaving out the ones that do not fit.

6. Begin with a fresh piece of paper to make a finished concept map of your culture.

7. Present your concept map to the class. Spice up the presentation with a dance, song or a traditional dish from your culture. If possible, dress in the traditional clothing of your culture from the early settlers’ days.
**ISLENOS (Islanders)** of St. Bernard Parish came from **CANARY ISLANDS**

7 Inhabited Islands off the north east coast of Africa

**CLIMATE:** Subtropical

**OCCUPATIONS:** Many were fishers. Farmers grew fruits, sugar, and tobacco.

**WHY THEY EMIGRATED:** Spanish Government began recruiting Canary Islanders in 1778 to defend Louisiana from the British. Whole families were transported to Louisiana.

**LANGUAGE:** Islenos spoke a dialect of Spanish, preserved due to isolation. Now only older people speak the language.

**TRADITIONAL DISHES:** “gofio,” a gruel of millet or corn and “caldo,” a soup

**FAMILIES WERE PROVIDED:** Land, a small house, a pig, food rations, and tools for farming

**TRADITIONAL ENTERTAINMENT:** Decimas, ballads, dances

**SOME ISLENO NAMES:** Perez, Nunez, Campo, Martinez

**SOME ISLENO VILLAGES:** St. Bernard, Delacroix, Shell Beach, Reggio

**LOUISIANA OCCUPATIONS:** Islenos began as farmers but later moved into the marsh to make a living fishing, hunting, and trapping as well as boat building.

**THE ISLENOS TODAY:** Face loss of the Islenos language, fisheries depletion, poor fur markets, and loss of the St. Bernard marshes.